

Julia Vincent
PO Box 75, Helena MT 59624
406-322-3144
jrvjrv@gmail.com

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Statement against SB 337:

The status of plains and wood bison has recently been reviewed by the UCN Species Specialist Committee-Bison Specialist Group composed of the leading scientists from three countries including State/Provincial/Federal agencies, Universities, and conservation groups.

Tribal cultural interests are important to the conservation and restoration of Bison. Yellowstone Bison are highly valued wildlife by Montana citizens and the nation at large. A recent survey by the American Bison Society showed that more than 74% of the American Public believes that Bison are an extremely important living symbol of the American West. The Bison is also the symbol for the U.S. Department of the Interior. A poll taken by the Bozeman *Chronicle* shows that 70% of those responding wanted the Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks to manage the Bison.

These Quarantine animals can significantly contribute to securing the longterm conservation of the American Bison. They come one of only a very few genetic source stocks of plains bison that reach back to the original bison populations of North America, prior to their extermination by Euro-Americans which began in the 1800's.

The Quarantine Protocol applied to this study was more rigorous than any ever attempted for wild or domestic animals yet.

- ⊗ Genesis—The basic science protocol for quarantine was established by the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee (GYIBC) and published in the Bison EIS (Appendix B) and the APHIS Brucellosis Uniform Methods and Rules. It was developed through extensive scientific review by experts from all agencies associated with GYIBC and reviewed by USAHA brucellosis committee.
- ⊗ Extensive scientific and public review
 - The Feasibility Study Scientific proposal went through extensive internal and external scientific review before the project began.
 - There has been extensive public review and opportunity for comment on the concepts and ideas of using quarantine as a tool to help manage bison in the Yellowstone Including:
 - The Bison EIS and IBMP-Decision rendered in 2000
 - It was brought before FWP Commission and Board of Livestock twice for their review during the development and implementation phase.
 - A Quarantine EA for Phase I was completed prior to the first step in the study.
 - Yet, another Quarantine EA for Phase II/III was completed as the study was expanded.
 - The final decision to release animals is currently being reviewed once again by MFWP.
 - Approval and support for the completion of the project and placing these bison in Tribal or public ownership.
 - Feasibility study development was supported by Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee, U.S. Animal Health Association Brucellosis Committee, Montana Department of Livestock, USDAAPHIS, and Intertribal Bison Cooperative.
 - A science report is provided to the USAHA Brucellosis Committee each year and input is received on the progress.
 - In the public review process, there were supporters from state/federal agencies, conservation NGO's, general citizens, and Montana sportsmen for this study.
 - Three tribes have already expressed serious interest in hosting these animals.
 - These bison have met and exceeded all standards for bison or cattle published in the APHIS

UM&R. Upon release they will have gone a measure beyond the requirements of the approved protocol and published rule to be declared disease free.

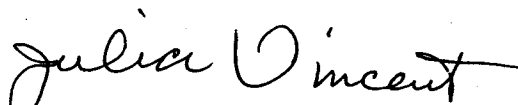
- To assure our understanding of testing protocols, this study added a culture step to the GYIBC protocol. At least half of the animals in the original test group were slaughtered and went through extensive culture testing to assure our serology predicted culture status.
- Blood serum from each sample was tested using all known tests including culture not just the standard cattle panel required by the Uniform Methods and Rules.
- They have been examined for the presence of other disease and are vaccinated against brucellosis.
- These bison have attained the highest testing standards in the Nation and exceed those currently required for cattle moving in or out of the Greater Yellowstone Area.
- ⌘ Additional state/federal safeguards are in place to protect Montana's brucellosis-free status.
- ⌘ If these standards are not high enough, then it raises significant questions about the entire National Animal Health system, which depends on UM&R standards. SB337 establishes a double standard for wildlife versus domestic livestock.
- ⌘ If these standards are not high enough, then what would satisfy the industry? If we cannot find a standard for "disease free" status in wildlife, then any discussion of eradication strategies come off the table as there would be no satisfactory measure of success and accomplishment of that goal by the industry.
- ⌘ SB 337 is a step backward in the management of brucellosis in Bison and in the conservation of wild bison in Montana. It is not in the best interest of the Nation, Montana, Conservation Interests or the Livestock Industry. This bill will take positive benefits from a science-based project and exchange them for another black eye for Montana.

I want to thank Buffalo Allies of Bozeman for the technical information and statistics in the preceeding paragraphs.

Brucellosis did not exist in North America before cattle were imported—cattle that arrived carrying the disease. There has not been one documented case of cattle contracting it from any member of the Yellowstone Bison Herd. SB 337 is not of benefit to anyone in Montana. It is merely another excuse to control or eliminate the last remaining herd of full blooded bison in the United States, a practice which started in the 1800's to clear all grasslands of indigenous inhabitants for the sake of a few private individuals raising imported livestock. Civilized nations work to preserve, protect and restore their indigenous wildlife that have been slaughtered to the verge of extinction.

Bison were eliminated from northeastern Montana over a century ago. Buffalo were never in the stories my mother shared with me about her childhood on a homestead 17 miles outside of Scobey. They had been exterminated before her family arrived in the early 1900's. Herds that exist now are not genetically pure bison. They are the descendants of forced cross-breeding of cattle with bison. In other words, beefallo.

SB 337 is, at best, a misuse of taxpayers' funds.


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